

Source Water Assessment Reports Are Now Available

*By Rob J. Beilfuss
Bureau of Water
Watershed Management Section*

In accordance with the 1996 amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) has fully implemented the Kansas Source Water Assessment Program. Under this program, local source water assessments were completed for all public water supplies that treat and distribute raw source water.

The purpose of these assessments was to educate public water suppliers and their surrounding communities so they can make informed decisions and protect their local drinking water sources.

Final Source Water Assessment Reports are now available on the KDHE Watershed Management Section web page at <http://www.kdhe.state.ks.us/nps/swap/>. These reports include much information about potential sources of contamination, susceptibility, and recommended water quality protection measures. More than 400 Kansas communities and public water suppliers directly participated in the completion of these reports and should be commended for their efforts. The final Source Water Assessment Reports will serve as the corner stone for future voluntary wellhead and watershed protection planning efforts in Kansas. Additional information regarding source water protection can be obtained on the above-referenced web page.

Communities interested in source water protection planning should consider the following seven-step process:

Step 1: Inform and Involve the Public

Public involvement will also play an important role in the implementation of any successful source water protection plan. Many of the water quality protection measures identified throughout the protection planning process are voluntary and will require local support or “ownership” to be implemented. That is why it’s so important to inform and involve the public from the start of the source water protection process.

Step 2: Establish a Source Water Protection Committee

In many cases a local Source Water Protection Committee may already exist. KDHE encourages public water suppliers to work cooperatively with local elected officials, county conservation district staff, environmental groups, the general public, and stakeholders in water quality.

Step 3: Review the Source Water Assessment Report

The Source Water Assessment Report includes much information regarding the location of local public water supplies, potential sources of contamination, and recommended

-Continued-

water quality protection measures. Much of the committees' review will focus on the Susceptibility Analysis Score (SAS). The SAS helps communities determine which types of contaminants pose the most significant threat to their water supply.

Step 4: Verify the Pollutant Source Inventory

KDHE utilized various State and private sector databases to help inventory potential sources of contamination around local drinking water supplies; however the information provided may not be entirely complete. There may be additional potential sources of contamination present that were not identified during the SWAP process. KDHE suggests that a thorough field inventory be conducted in local source water assessment areas to help confirm existing SWAP inventory data and identify additional sources of contamination. Nonpoint sources of contamination (row crops, septic systems, small feed lots, etc.) are prevalent in Kansas and may not have been identified during the SWAP process. It is very important for local committees to identify nonpoint sources of contamination and help implement water quality protection measures or best management practices (BMPs) where needed.

Step 5: Select Water Quality Protection Measures

The local committee should work cooperatively to implement appropriate water quality protection measures for the most significant sources of contamination identified. For facilities regulated by KDHE or other agency, law and regulations mandate many water quality protection measures. Local committees may often focus on non-regulated potential sources of contamination identified during the SWAP process. The Source Water Assessment Report includes a generic list of water quality protection measures for many of the potential sources of contamination identified. KDHE recommends that local committees work cooperatively with local and State agencies to identify and implement appropriate water quality protection measures.

Step 6: Implementation Planning

The local committee should create an implementation plan for all water quality protection measures identified during this process. The plan should include appropriate funding resources, time schedule for implementation, and responsible parties.

Step 7: Emergency Water Supply Planning

The Source Water Protection Plan should also include actions to be taken during water emergencies. These emergencies may include extreme drought, contamination spills, etc. A boilerplate emergency water supply plan will be posted on the KDHE Watershed Management Section web page in the near future.